

## **Appendix A**

### **Stakeholder Interviews**

*Tour Bus Management Initiative* stakeholders include representatives of the motor coach industry serving Washington, DC and the governing agencies, institutions, businesses and communities within the city that are affected by tour bus operations. These stakeholders have direct experience with and detailed knowledge of the conditions creating the need for improved tour bus management. An important source of information for the *Initiative* was a series of over 20 interviews conducted with key stakeholders:

- American Bus Association
- World Strides
- New World Tours
- Old Town Trolley Tours of Washington DC
- National Tourist Association
- Capital Entertainment Services
- National Cathedral
- Professional Tour Guides of Washington DC
- Office of Council Member Sharon Ambrose
- District of Columbia DOT
- The National Park Service
- U.S. Capitol Visitor Services
- U.S. Capitol Police
- Smithsonian Institution
- Union Station
- Office of the Architect of the Capitol
- Washington DC Convention and Tourism Corporation
- Downtown DC Business Improvement District
- District Department of Transportation
- National Park Service
- Newseum
- Georgetown Partnership

Individual interview participants are identified at the end of this appendix.

The interviews conducted combined a set of standard questions, asking respondents to identify major issues of concern to their organization, needs related to tour bus service, and expectations of the study. In addition, the interviews were tailored to the nature of the organization represented by the respondent: tour bus operator or other industry representative; agency with authority for a site visited by tour groups; or governing agency with jurisdiction for some aspect of tour bus operations (including parking) or tourism. Respondents were asked for data or quantitative aspects of tour bus activity or visitation, as appropriate, in addition to the questions that were more subjective in nature.

The results of these interviews are reported in this appendix, with responses organized into four categories: 1) Characteristics of Tour Bus Operations 2) Factors Affecting Tour Bus Operations; 3) Problems Associated with Tour Bus Operations; and 4) Recommended Solutions.

## **A.1 Characteristics of Tour Bus Operations**

This first category comprises information on the volume, distribution, and nature of tour bus activity in the District.

### **A.1.1 Service Characteristics**

#### **Service Area**

Tour bus operators report that tour bus operations are concentrated in the “Monumental Core” area between the Lincoln Memorial and the Capitol. Major routes through the area are Pennsylvania, Constitution, and Independence Avenues. Several destinations, among them Fords Theatre, five of the 15 Smithsonian museums and Georgetown, are located outside this area. Eight main geographic areas for tour operators were identified:

- (1) Capitol/Union Station/Supreme Court/Library of Congress;
- (2) Lincoln Memorial/Korean Veterans Memorial/Vietnam Veterans Memorial;
- (3) Jefferson Memorial (over the Kutz Bridge);
- (4) Holocaust Museum/Bureau of Engraving;
- (5) Fords Theatre;
- (6) Smithsonian museums (National Mall);
- (7) Georgetown
- (8) National Cathedral/Washington Zoo/Naval Observatory; and
- (9) Alexandria, Virginia/Arlington Cemetery/ Mt. Vernon.

Main tour bus routes to and from the District are New York Avenue, Pennsylvania Avenue, GW Parkway, Rt. 66, Connecticut Avenue, Wisconsin Avenue, Memorial Bridge and South Capitol Street.

### **A.1.2 Mode of Operations**

**Types of Tours:** Four basic types of tours and operators were identified:

- (1) Motor coach tours originating from outside the DC area, generally with “step-on” tour guides that go with groups to visit multiple sites, on a largely planned itinerary (that may be subject to change, based on ticket availability and other contingencies); bus operators and drivers may be either local or from out of town; some operators do not own buses but contract with companies that do, while others own some vehicles directly and contract for others. One industry representative with this type of operation described his role as “on-demand transportation provider.”

- (2) Local school groups on field trips, often using school buses;
- (3) Sight-seeing trolleys that let passengers, who typically are not in organized tour groups, on and off at multiple stops; “Lecture” drivers do not depart from vehicles and buses do not park;
- (4) Special event charters transporting groups to a single destination or to a few related destinations.

In the case of the first two categories above, drivers usually attempt to park as close as possible to destinations. Pick-up and drop-off generally are at the same location, as a matter of convenience and comfort for seniors and children, in particular. In addition, tour bus operators find that loading and unloading at the same location facilitates group formation and order. Designated parking spaces, sometimes on-site, may be provided for special event charters.

### **Tour Bus Parking Locations:**

There are about 15 curbside locations where tour buses currently park. Local operators/drivers know where to find them. Out-of-town drivers do more searching. Based both on knowledge and opportunity, the ability to locate available on-street spaces reflects the following “pecking order:” 1) commuter buses; 2) local motor coaches; 3) out-of-town motor coaches. The following are specific curbside parking locations identified:

- Independence Avenue west of 15<sup>th</sup> Street behind the Washington Monument (10 spaces)
- Ohio Drive in West Potomac Park
- West Basin Drive in West Potomac Park
- Near Ford’s Theater, as well as the Lincoln and Jefferson Memorials
- A small number of tour bus spaces (1-2 or 3-4) are located under the bridge by the Jefferson Memorial (George Mason Memorial Bridge)
- Virginia Avenue across from Watergate
- Haynes Point area (East Potomac Park)
- At and around Lincoln Memorial are 20-25 spaces for drop-off/pick-up
- The Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, in the northwest quadrant of District, 3 spaces close to Metro
- Maine Avenue, SW near the Fish Market

Space is also available in the area immediately to the south of the South Capitol Street Bridge, between I-295 and the Anacostia River, as well as beneath the Southwest/Southeast Freeway.

The Union Station garage, governed by a board consisting of the U.S. Department of Transportation, Amtrak, the Federal Railroad Administration, the Federal City Council, and the District, is the only tour bus parking facility available in the central part of the District. While parking is available at this site at the rate of \$20 for several hours, tour bus operators desire to move around more frequently and seek free spaces. Peak bus occupancy rates at Union Station are 11:30AM-2:30PM and 5:00PM-7:00PM. Bus flows to and from

Union Station and the adjacent area were measured as a basis for allocating 50-70 spaces for buses within the garage; some of these spaces, however, are leased to specific tour operators, such as Grayline and Greyhound, and are not available to other motor coaches on a first come first served (FCFS) basis. In the future, Greyhound may lease all of the tour bus spaces at Union Station. Also, automobiles currently are allowed to park on a garage deck that was built to accommodate buses. As a result, tour bus capacity at Union Station is somewhat artificially constrained.

Another parking facility used by tour buses with District destinations is in Pentagon City. Tour bus operators prefer to take tour groups to Pentagon city for meal times because parking is free.

In Spring 2002, the National Cathedral introduced a reservation system that limits the number of buses to available spaces and uses software to schedule trips in advance. As a result, visitation has been cut in half. Before, buses brought visitors to the Cathedral at any time.

Two curbside lanes in front of the Cathedral on the eastern side of Wisconsin Avenue accommodate 17 tour bus parking spaces. The maximum capacity of the spaces, with average turnover, is 54 buses per day. Spaces are posted “No Parking 10 AM –4 PM Without Emergency Parking Permit,” year-round. The community can park in the curbside lane from 4:00 PM to 9:30 AM. Bus marshals (paid \$30/hour) welcome tour bus guests. The Cathedral arranged for use of the lanes for tour bus parking in exchange for land it ceded to the City to develop bus service lanes and curbside parking on Wisconsin Avenue. The Cathedral has attempted to establish neighboring parking garage partnerships and the National Presbyterian Church has agreed to provide spaces for 2-3 buses.

The National Zoo has 100 spaces (general parking spaces) and uses the parking area at the Carter Baron amphitheater parking lot for overflow. The National Zoo’s parking lot is used for parking buses transporting passengers to the zoo on weekdays during the peak season of March through June. Priority is given to buses arriving from local schools, which must make reservations to park. Tour and other school buses can reserve parking only with the purchase of a group tour package. There is no bus parking available on weekends unless the group is registered for a group tour package.

The Washington Monument also has a reservation system for tour buses and Ford’s Theatre is looking into it. The Smithsonian does not operate any public parking facilities, with the exception of those at the National Zoo.

### **Duration of Parking**

According to information provided by tour operators and representatives of individual sites visited by tourists, the length of time a tour group spends at the individual stops included in an itinerary varies from as little as 20 minutes to as long as four hours, as illustrated by the following examples.

- Ford’s Theater – 1 hour

- Jefferson and FDR Memorials – 20-30 min. visits ea.
- Lincoln, Vietnam Veterans, Korean Veterans Memorials – 1 hour visits
- Smithsonian Museums - 2-4 hours.
- Groups are required to be on a guided tour at the National Cathedral; they are not allowed to wander on their own. Guided tours of the Cathedral are 1 - 1 1/2 hours long

“Picture or photo” stops take place outside attractions like the Capitol, White House, and Library of Congress when groups cannot get tickets for admission. These stops are short in duration, generally less than ½ hour. Sometimes, the groups take a quick picture while the bus waits in traffic. Then, minutes later, the group reboards the bus. At other times, the bus will circle the block or loop around several blocks.

### **A.1.3 Tour Bus Market**

#### **Number of Tour Buses and Visitors**

Although data collection has not been a high priority for any of the stakeholders interviewed, some tour bus operators and a few of the institutional representatives conveyed a rough sense of tour bus ridership and visitation. An unofficial estimate from a bus industry representative is that tour bus traffic represents about 1/3 of all visitors to the District and that on a typical spring day, approximately 1,000 tour buses transport visitors to the District’s sites. An estimate offered by one of the bus operators—1,100 tour buses per day in the peak season-- is roughly consistent with this figure. Yet another tour bus operator reports that from February to July, his company organizes tours for 75-100 buses per day in the District and that his service carries 118,000 passengers per year. Another bus operator estimates that on an annual basis, 120,000 tour buses operate in the District and that his company transports over 4,000 students per day in the District under various contracts.

The Smithsonian Museums record the number of visits to individual sites (but not visitors, because there is no way of eliminating repeat visitors from counts), but no other data are collected. The Museums attract approximately 21 million visits per year.

#### **Seasonality**

The busiest time for tour bus activity is in April and May and secondarily, in March and June. The tour bus market can be divided roughly into three seasons: a primary peak spring season from late March 15 to June 15; a secondary peak fall season from mid-September through mid-November; and the off-peak winter (December through February) and summer (July through mid-September) seasons. A large proportion of tour bus passengers in the spring—estimated at about 40 percent--consist of school groups. The fall season, however, is primarily an adult market.

Estimates of the degree of peaking vary among several of the stakeholders, perhaps reflecting the segment of the tour bus market with which they are most familiar. One of the

tour bus operators reports that the fall season, extending from September 15 through November 15, is a secondary peak, rivaling the volume of buses in the spring. Also, according to this respondent, the number of buses in service in the summer is 20 percent lower than in the spring and fall peak seasons, and tour bus activity declines by 40 percent in winter, compared to the peak seasons. Another respondent reported that tour bus activity was off by 50 percent in the winter. According to a different operator, in May and June the number of vehicles his company has in service declines by 50 percent, compared to April. One operator, who currently does not operate in the summer, is trying to encourage schools to schedule trips during this time frame.

### **Ridership Characteristics**

Ridership during the peak spring season consists primarily of seniors and students. Characteristics of tourism that are unique to the District have a major affect on the circulation patterns of tour buses. Specific factors of note include the large proportion of school children (particularly in the spring) and senior citizens (year-round), as well as the fact that Federal attractions generally are free of charge. Children, in particular, have short attention spans and the duration of visits to individual attractions is very short—frequently, tour buses stop at 12 or more sites per day. Moreover, free admissions serve as an incentive for short visits to multiple sites, resulting in relatively large impacts on traffic and use of lots of curbside spaces. Also, due to liability concerns (and perhaps consumer preference) buses make frequent drop-offs/pick-ups, transporting passengers even very short distances between sites, rather than requiring passengers to walk. One bus operator observed that visitors want to see as much as they can in a short amount of time. The tour group needs to have the ability to “jump on the bus and go right to Ford’s Theatre or the National Theatre, etc.”

Organized events and activities at the National Cathedral, such as the Medieval Workshop and DC history school program partnerships, bring students to the District on school buses, adding to demand for curbside space.

A further characteristic of group tour visitation patterns is that they tend to avoid remaining in the District after popular tourist destinations have closed. Most tour groups stay outside the District to take advantage of economy hotels. One operator also suggested that tour groups are deterred from spending the night at hotels in the District due to a lack of convenient and secure overnight parking for motor coaches.

The typically student-oriented market has been drastically affected by current world events and security threats:

- A major current concern to the tour bus industry is the drop in demand due to security threats.
- The Department of Homeland Security’s issuance of code orange in early Spring 2003 caused school districts to cancel trips to Washington, DC. This is a large proportion of the tourist market in DC.
- Security concerns and restrictions around the Capitol have limited the area available for tour bus drop-off, pick-up and parking.

- District and New York schools are not allowing group trips to the District or New York City due to the terrorism threat. According to one respondent, upwards of 80 percent of the schools in the Washington area currently are subject to such a restriction.

## **A.2 Conditions Affecting Tour Bus Operations**

### **A.2.1 Changes in Conditions**

A number of comments concerned specific policies that changed tour bus parking supply or usage:

- New Jersey Avenue formerly had more bus parking, which has since been removed. A respondent observed that many on-street spaces for tour bus parking have been lost over the years, but could not quantify or indicate specific streets affected. Another respondent said that there used to be tour bus parking spots on 10th street, which have since been eliminated.
- In recent years, the price of parking at Union Station has risen from \$7 for 3 hours to a \$20 flat fee.
- Revenue sources for tour bus management are in question. DC Code (1981 edition) §47-2829 required that vehicles for hire, having a seating capacity of more than 12 passengers, obtain a license and pay a license tax of \$150 per year or \$10 per day at the option of the operator. This law was administered by the Taxicab Commission, which ignored the law and collected \$10 per year for tour bus license fees. When the Council placed collection of the fee under the jurisdiction of the Department of Public Works and the DPW sent out letters indicating its intent to collect the fee as established by the statute, the tour bus industry sued the District. Prior to any formal decision, the Office of Corporation Counsel (OCC) required that the District abandon collection of the fee in exchange for a dismissal of the suit.
- Fines for illegal parking and idling were raised last year from the \$20-\$50 range to \$500.
- In the past, the National Cathedral hired off-duty police to ticket double parking, deter idling, and manage tour buses and other traffic, but found this strategy to be ineffective.
- The District used to have a tour bus map, which was very useful, but it is out of print.<sup>21</sup>

### **A.2.2 Current Conditions**

- The management of tour bus traffic and parking -- combined with wear and tear on infrastructure -- impose costs on the District Government. Several years ago, a tour bus registration fee was invalidated. As a consequence, the District obtains no revenues from the tour bus industry

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<sup>21</sup> An updated tour bus map has been posted on the District Department of Transportation website since the interview was conducted.

that can be used to manage this activity. An analysis of how this could be reinstated would be tremendously helpful.

- Buses are limited by the 3 minute idling restriction for loading/unloading and violators who exceed this limit are subject to the \$500 fine for illegal idling. The substantial fine serves as a strong incentive to obey laws. The driver, rather than the tour bus company, pays the ticket.
- Different tour bus companies decide independently where they go. The Smithsonian institutions have no way to predict or monitor where they go.
- Major new developments (e.g., new convention center, Newseum, Museum of the American Indian, Spy Museum) have no provision for bus parking.
- Smithsonian Institutions have no parking management plan. Tour bus parking has been very limited on the National Mall, including Jefferson and Madison Drives. The space on the mall is owned by the National Park Service, which control the space.
- Buses drop-off and load at the “Big Three” Smithsonians: Air and Space museum, Natural History museum, and the American History museum.
- There is a large parking garage under the Air and Space museum, which has been closed due to security concerns. Even if the garage can accommodate only automobiles, keeping it closed makes curbside spaces for buses that much harder to come by.
- During construction of the Capitol Visitor’s Center, loading/unloading space for up to 10 tour buses is provided on the drive connecting to 1<sup>st</sup> Street West.
- One of the operators expressed the opinion that there is ample parking for buses outside the spring and summer peak seasons and there would be ample parking for local bus operators were it not for the out of town motor coaches.

### **A.2.3 Future Development**

A major problem is that more memorials and places to visit are being built (e.g., the Spy Museum, World War II Monument, and the new Convention Center) but new parking spaces are not being created for buses and sometimes existing spaces are being displaced. The Smithsonian is building a new facility on the Mall to open in September 2004, the Museum of the American Indian, between 3rd and 4<sup>th</sup> Streets, SW. This space used to provide 8-10 tour bus spaces.

When the Newseum comes on-line, an additional 200 buses per day may be attracted to the immediate vicinity along Pennsylvania Avenue, according to one of the bus operators. The Newseum expects visitation of 1.5-1.7 million per year. Many of these visitors will travel on foot to the Newseum from another nearby point of interest. Perhaps 20 percent of visitors may be part of a tour group.

The New Convention Center at New York Avenue and 9th Street NW opened in early 2003. This facility is the fifth largest convention center in the country, with the capacity to



accommodate 20,000-30,000 visitors at one time. The Center has limited facilities for tour bus parking. Also, there will be an inadequate number of hotel rooms in the immediate vicinity, which may lead to stays outside the District with bus shuttle operations to the Convention Center, again with no parking provision.

The long-range plans for the National Cathedral retain the site as a pastoral landscape. Cathedral planners envision the creation of a sacred precinct, with cars removed along the Cathedral perimeter on Wisconsin Avenue, Woodley Road, and 34th and Garfield Streets. The Cathedral does not plan to increase visitation, but is concerned about neighbors' continuing requests that special parking permits for the curb lanes be denied to the Cathedral. It is the perception of Cathedral officials that these requests are due to past grievances, rather than current operating conditions. The Cathedral is considering redesigning the west side of its property to accommodate buses in front.

When the new Capitol Visitors' Center opens in 2005, six bus drop-off/pick-up sites will be provided on 1<sup>st</sup> Street East.

### **A.3 Problems Associated with Tour Bus Operations**

All stakeholders mentioned a shortage of tour bus parking spaces as the primary problem affecting tour bus operations. A number of those interviewed discussed different aspects of the problem: loading/unloading space; short-term parking; longer-term layovers, including overnight parking; location-specific issues; pricing; and lack of information.

#### **A.3.1 Parking**

The problem at its most basic, as universally identified by those interviewed, is a lack of parking space for tour buses. Respondents said that there is no place to park during the day or during the night. "There has never been enough parking," according to one bus operator, who expressed the opinion that the last few years has seen a worsening of the problem due to the removal of previously existing spaces. Lack of even short-term drop-off and pickup locations leads to illegal curbside drop-off/pickup activity, excessive cruising between drop-off and pick-up, and double/triple parking. Sometimes cars are parked in the few areas where tour bus parking signs are posted. The lack of enforcement of existing regulations reserving designated parking spaces for tour buses is not enforced adequately.

In addition to the need for simple storage of vehicles, there is a need for layover areas for longer-term parking (one hour to overnight) where services are available for drivers. No service facilities currently are available offering food, rest rooms/lounges, exercise facilities, etc.

As a consequence of the lack of parking space and the high fees and limited availability of spaces at Union Station, tour buses cruise the city streets searching for on-street parking, both legal and illegal, frequently driving continuously between drop-offs and pick-ups without parking at all. One of the bus operators expressed frustration that the new Capitol

Visitor Center will not include tour bus parking. Further exacerbating the parking shortage is lack of knowledge about the location of existing spaces, particularly among out-of-town drivers.

Specific problem areas that have been identified in the Monumental Core are: the area around the White House, where parked tour buses block view corridors; the Lincoln Memorial, where there is no place to load/unload buses due to parked buses occupying all the space, and where maneuverability is difficult due to ongoing construction activities; 15<sup>th</sup> Street NW along the ellipse; 17<sup>th</sup> Street; and Constitution Avenue, where problems are confined largely to the spring. In addition to the physical constraint on curb space, buses lined up near tourist destinations are sometimes considered a visual blight.

The parking shortage obviously is most critical during peak seasons. At the National Cathedral, parking problems and traffic congestion associated with tour bus operations are limited to the hours of 10 –11:30 AM and 12:45 – 3:15 PM, because tours are only offered during those times, and even at those times problems tend to occur only during the four-month spring season. School bus schedules result in a timing problem: because buses do not become available until 10:00 AM, “bunching” or concentration of bus traffic occurs mid-day.

### **A.3.2 Traffic**

The traffic problems associated with tour bus operations relate to the volume and concentration of tour bus activity in peak seasons, the concentration of bus arrivals at specific times of day, and parking, as noted previously. Tour buses contribute to morning peak hour traffic, because tour groups need to buy tickets early in the day for a number of sites. A serious manifestation of the problem, as expressed by one of the tour operators, is



**F Street North of Ford's Theatre**

bus queuing and stacking in the through lanes of city streets. Severe traffic congestion occurs at such destinations as Ford's Theatre. Some destinations (e.g. Holocaust Museum) require timed tickets (that are free) to keep the flow of tourists more orderly. At others (such as Ford's Theatre) groups show up all at once and form huge lines. This overloading is

problematic for both pedestrians and vehicular traffic. Solving problems at Ford's Theatre is a high priority for the Downtown Business Improvement District.

Compounding the long-standing causes of tour bus-related traffic problems are recent measures enacted to increase the level of security at key federal landmarks that are prime tourist destinations. Specifically cited was the portion of 17<sup>th</sup> Street west of the White

House, which is now restricted only to Metrobuses, with no tour buses allowed. Except for drop-off at the U.S. Grant Memorial and pick-up at the Peace Monument, tour bus and other traffic now generally is restricted from streets in the immediate vicinity of the White House.

Moreover, one tour bus operator complained that the city closes streets on a short-term basis, as for an event, without advance notice to “anyone,” including tour bus operators. He cites this as an example of a more general problem with coordination and communications. He also noted that he has requested that the city set up a hotline to call with questions about street closings and regulations. Currently, the District Government’s website home page and DDOT’s web page contain information about street closings for construction and special events.

### **A.3.3 Neighborhood Impacts**

Another set of frequently mentioned problems concerned the impact of tour bus operations on neighborhoods. Parking is, to a significant degree, a root cause of these problems. Bus operators expressed concern that neighborhoods want to eliminate tour buses, citing in particular the efforts of communities around Capitol Hill. Generally, neighborhoods object to tour buses traveling on local streets; on-street parking or double-parking is regarded as being even more objectionable. The speed of buses on neighborhood streets also is cited as a concern. Capitol Hill residents view Constitution and Independence Avenues between 2nd and 19th Streets NE as neighborhood streets.

The problem is viewed to a significant degree as being caused by buses seeking parking spaces in neighborhoods when spaces are lacking in primary tourism areas. Some of the neighborhoods, particularly historic ones such as Georgetown, Capitol Hill, DuPont Circle and Old Town Anacostia, have streets that are not suitable for buses due to their geometry and inability to sustain vehicles of such weight. The District desires to provide access to historic areas without jeopardizing safety or destroying the street and sidewalk infrastructure. The District, as well as the National Park Service and other organizations administering points of interest, face neighborhood pressures to curtail tour bus operations.

A further problem results from buses idling in on-street spaces to keep air conditioning going in hot weather. The diesel fumes emitted by idling buses cause air pollution, both in local neighborhoods and in the vicinity of sites. Operators report that buses require 20-40 minutes to cool off or warm up. Thus, the limitation of idling time to only a few minutes is unworkable if reasonably comfortable conditions are to be maintained for bus passengers. Even new bus models require a minimum of 5 minutes to activate pneumatic systems to the minimum PSI threshold (120 lbs.) for the air brakes to work. Neighborhoods also have expressed concern about presumed leakage of oil and fuel from idling tour buses. District communities have lobbied the City Council successfully to restrict tour bus idling--hence the City’s adoption of steep \$500 fines.

An associated problem is that buses taking neighborhood residents from the District to other cities (e.g. Atlantic City) cannot park in convenient locations for pick-up and drop-

off. One of the bus operators expressed the opinion that problems with neighborhood impacts are confined for the most part to the peak four-month spring season.

Neighborhood issues are the primary factor that motivated the tour bus parking policy of the National Cathedral. While no formal complaints have been received since the current policy was instituted, residents on local neighborhood streets want all tour bus operations confined to Wisconsin Avenue, while residents of Wisconsin Avenue do not want the tour buses either. On behalf of the neighbors, the Cathedral requested that the city post a sign stating “No right turns for buses” from Wisconsin Avenue onto Woodley Road. The city has not agreed to post the sign. The Cathedral want to encourage buses to turn around at Tenley Circle, to the north.

### **A.3.4 Licensing, Regulations, and Enforcement**

Obtaining the revenues needed to support tour bus management, including parking, has proved to be a challenge. As noted previously, legal challenges to licensing fees for large-capacity vehicles for hire has jeopardized the most promising source of funding.

Another issue is lack of licensing for out of town tour guides. Local tour guides are required to obtain licenses under District ordinance (Chapter 19, Section 12). Also, the Washington Metropolitan Transportation Commission issues mandatory Certificates of Authority to local operators, but no certification is required for out of town tour buses or tour guides. The *Tourmobile* concession operated for the National Park Service, which competes with private trolleys, is not required to have registered vehicles, commercial drivers licenses for tour bus drivers, or tour guide licenses.

### **A.4 Recommended Solutions**

Stakeholders presented a variety of potential solutions, including suggested parking sites and policies, facilities, amenities, and regulatory measures to address the problems associated with tour bus operations.

#### **A.4.1 Potential Parking Sites**

- New Jersey Avenue, SE and I Street, SE, south of New Jersey Avenue bridge: described as an ideal location; Marty Tchernoff is the owner of part of the site and has indicated his willingness to either sell the property or participate in a public/private partnership to build a parking structure with tour buses at ground level and autos on a second level. Office development is occurring in the area nearby, so there will be a market for a private parking facility. The other part of the parcel is owned by the CSX Railroad and it is unclear how cooperative they are likely to be. The owners of a privately operated club across the street has expressed interest in operating a restaurant/lounge to serve tour bus drivers. The site is near two Metro stations.
- South of Frederick Douglas Memorial (South Capitol Street )Bridge between I-295 and Anacostia River; a limited number of motor coaches

currently park there now. The site is owned by the Department of the Navy, which has expressed willingness to have the parcel used as tour bus parking site. The site has good highway access, no intersections; and is approximately ½ mile from the Anacostia Metrorail Station—some passengers could transfer to Metro. There is a possible environmental problem associated with use of the site for parking a large number of tour buses, because it is so close to the Anacostia River.

- Paid parking lot under Southeast/Southwest Expressway (I-395) owned by City and leased to private operator
- Site of old Convention Center, on temporary basis until site is redeveloped
- Barney Circle under access road
- Massachusetts Avenue and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street NW City garage
- Massachusetts Avenue and 9<sup>th</sup> Street NW, 2 blocks north of old Convention Center
- Navy Yard/Federal Center is possibility for long-term parking
- RFK Stadium: The site is approximately 3 miles and 10-15 minutes from the Monumental Core. Open the SE/SW freeway ramp to the stadium to allow buses to bypass neighborhoods. Need to get buy-in to this option from the DC Sports and Entertainment Commission and the National Park Service. A disadvantage of this site is that there would be some time periods where the parking area would be unavailable to tour buses because of events held at the Stadium.
- A planning study for rehabilitation of the L'Enfant Promenade is considering the development of an intermodal transportation center (ITC) under Banneker Overlook, which is now the termination of the Promenade. A memorial and/or museum would be built atop the ITC. The ITC would contain spaces for tour bus parking and auto parking.
- There are relatively few potential new "on-street" locations at this time. A possibility that could be explored is use of the E Street expressway near the Kennedy Center and parts of the SE/SW Freeway near Barney Circle. There seems to be excess pavement in these locations that is not being used for traffic. However, there are likely to be institutional and safety issues of concern to the Federal Highway Administration regarding these sites.
- There is a need for a distributed system of long-term parking facilities, perhaps one in each quadrant of the District. Sizing of facilities in each quadrant would be in relationship to the number of attractions and expected bus flows drawn to these attractions.
- The Cathedral submitted a proposal to "borrow" some of the Western Metrobus Garage parking spaces, but is having difficulty coordinating times with WMATA. The lot is approximately two miles from the Cathedral, and may therefore be too far. The Cathedral is open to a strategy of drop-off/pick-up on-site at the Cathedral, with bus layover at a parking facility farther away.

- For National Cathedral: Carter Baron amphitheater parking (about 2 miles from Cathedral), might dovetail quite nicely with a “drop-off/pick-up” strategy (not currently used).
- The National Zoo has parking, but access is constrained due to traffic on Connecticut Avenue
- Construction of a large garage under the Ellipse or other centrally-located Federal property
- Preferred solution may be smaller number of parking spaces in multiple locations well-distributed throughout District: 50-100 buses per site, rather than one large 1000-bus capacity location.
- There is a need for bus “stand by” short-term parking near major sites (White House Visitor Center, Washington Monument, Capitol Visitor Center), as well as remote sites for longer-term layovers.
- There is a need for a smaller lot for 15-60 minute stops in the vicinity of Ford’s Theater.
- Smaller visitor sites beyond the Monumental Core are not generally configured for tour bus parking.

#### **A.4.2 Facility Requirements**

What types of facilities are needed to better accommodate tour bus operations in the District? Bus operators and industry representatives are the primary source of the comments on preferred bus layover/parking facility characteristics:

- A primary criterion for any future bus layover facility is very good accessibility, but that there is some flexibility in terms of maximum acceptable travel times (e.g., 5 minutes to Capitol/Monumental Core is ideal, but 10-15 minutes would be acceptable)
- Parking facilities would need a building, television, food, rest rooms/lounges, and ideally internet and office support capability as well as exercise rooms; also, vehicle services (fuel, washing, vehicle inspection, minor repair/maintenance, bus dumping facilities for waste, non-restricted engine-warming/idling location, possibly emission filtering/cleaning)
- Bus drivers, like truckers, like to congregate with other bus drivers. A central, accessible place to support this social interaction is critical but currently lacking in the District.
- A state-of-the-art bus parking facility is needed; requirements are 10-15 acre parcel, 2-3 acres used for driver and bus service facilities. Rule of thumb is 75-100 buses can be parked per acre depending on configuration and performance standards; a 10-acre parcel could support (with accompanying service facilities) a capacity for parking 500-600 buses.

### **A.4.3 Management Options**

Ideas for managing the flow of tour bus traffic ranged from different means of distributing tour bus passengers to sites within the District, to scheduling, tour bus routing, and possible shared use of parking areas.

- Strategies must recognize intrinsic nature of operations: drop-off/pick-up at multiple locations, buses in and out, relatively short duration of 1-2 hours at a time
- One of the tour bus operators suggested a three-part parking solution: (1) designated parking areas for commuter buses; (2) designated parking for tour buses during peak seasons; (3) designated loading/unloading areas for local charter buses to pick-up/drop-off locals. In addition, restrictions on loading/unloading frequency should be implemented, as in Atlantic City, to regulate traffic flow.
- One respondent who was not a tour bus operator suggested that local operators who know the metropolitan area should park outside of city limits to free up limited parking space for out-of-state operators.
- Walking must be encouraged among sites in close proximity to each other. Tour groups could walk from Jefferson to FDR, and around the Smithsonian Museums.
- One of the tour bus operators suggested that there should be no tour bus parking within the National Mall, citing the prohibition of tour bus parking from designated areas near attractions in other cities.
- The District Department of Transportation would like to enlist the National Park Service as a partner in the tour bus management effort. Perhaps the Park service could provide some underground parking near the Mall to avoid visual blight or perhaps they could make some other accommodation.
- Another tour bus industry representative suggested that distribution of tour bus passengers in the downtown area by local public/private tour operators (e.g., Tourmobile, Old Town Trolley) from a central tour bus parking facility/hub might be acceptable, provided these local operators provide a circulator service that started and ended at the central bus facility for easy passenger transfer back to their original tour bus. The respondent referred to Atlantic City as a “model” long-term parking and service facility for tour buses, but acknowledged that the nature of operations is different between the two cities (i.e. the District has multi-stop operations).
- Use of the proposed Downtown Circulator should be considered to distribute tour bus passengers from one or more parking sites at the periphery of the downtown area.
- Good way-finding signage is critical, particularly for out-of-state drivers. Way finding at major attractions would indicate location(s) and route(s) to any future long-term bus parking/service facilities.

- A bus operator suggested that security concerns could be addressed by affixing some type of security clearance sticker to a tour bus indicating that the bus has been inspected/checked and is now cleared for operating around the Monuments.<sup>22</sup>
- Formal Best Practices Guidelines – The City could create guidelines and cite examples of how other cities have tackled similar problems
- From the perspective of the Smithsonian, a mandatory coordinated scheduling system may be difficult to implement Smithsonian-wide. The National Zoo, which is part of the Smithsonian, already has a group reservations system in place that is tied to the availability of tour bus parking, and some other individual Smithsonian museums and/or programs might also be candidates for coordinated scheduling.
- If bus parking was placed outside the District in the suburbs, individuals could get to the Smithsonian via Metro very easily. Tour bus companies oppose this option because it takes more time and is more inconvenient, and schools would find it cheaper to rent buses and take school groups directly to the District. Several bus operators and other stakeholders stated that it is not realistic to expect tour buses to park at Union Station or other terminals and have tour groups take the Metro for circulation and distribution to/from City attractions. One bus operator wanted “to dispel the myth” that tour groups can be dropped off at Metro stops and use Metro to connect to/from venues and attractions. He stated that groups want bus pick-up and drop-off at the same location, explaining that tour groups want a certain personal safety and security comfort level that they can only get by having “their” bus in view and available for pick-up at the same location as the drop-off point.
- The American Bus Association has recommended, as part of the reauthorization of TEA 21 that WMATA allow use of Metrobus lots during the day by tour buses, after WMATA buses pull out. The shared use of facilities, at a reasonable fee for tour buses, is possible because Metrobuses and tour buses often require parking at different, complementary times.
- An integrated and automated electronic recognition, occupancy and payment system is needed to provide real-time information on the occupancy of tour bus lots. The database would be used for coordinated dispatching to available parking spaces, in conjunction with one-time daily fee payment, and perhaps automated billing to the bus operator’s company account.
- Recommended tour bus routing: Commercial corridors in Capitol Hill to which tour bus operations should be confined are Pennsylvania, H Street, Benning Road, Maryland and New York Avenues, So. Capitol and No. Capitol Streets.
- Another possible suggestion: stripe pavement to designate bus routes (for out of town operators).

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<sup>22</sup> Editor’s note: Controlled access would be required at all times to ensure that bus remained secure.



- Should consider exclusive traffic lanes for buses
- Shuttle service could be provided to transport tour bus drivers at night and first thing in the morning to and from remote lots
- More rigorous enforcement of laws will be necessary to motivate bus drivers to change existing behaviors, particularly to use remote lots.

## **A.5 Interview Participants**

### **Bus Industry:**

Chuck Andrews, World Strides  
John Best, Capital Entertainment Services  
David Bolen, New World Tours  
David Cohen, Old Town Trolley  
Jim Santini, National Tourist Association  
Peter Pantuso, American Bus Association

### **Non- Industry Stakeholders:**

Julie Cooke, National Cathedral  
Skip Coburn, Office of Council Member Sharon Ambrose  
Maureen Cyron, Professional Tour Guides of Washington, DC  
Ted Daniel, Director, U.S. Capitol Visitor Center  
Len Foxwell and Joe Sternlieb, Downtown Business Improvement District  
Ken Gray, Georgetown Partnership  
Susan Hinton, Heidi Strickfaden, Alexa Viets, Karen Cucurullo, Lance Hatten, Audrey Calhoun, Claudia Anderson, Jacque Lavelle, Bob Karoth, Gayle Hazelwood, Stephen Lorenzetti, Susan M. Oregor, Kathy Kupper--National Park Service  
Linda Jeffries, Newseum  
Peter May, Architect of the Capitol  
Lisa McClure, Union Station  
Chuck Morse, Washington DC Convention and Tourism Corporation  
Russ Preble, Guild of Professional Tour Guides of Washington, D.C.  
Captain Michael Prelow, U.S. Capitol Police  
Katherine Neil Ridgley, Smithsonian  
Rick Rybeck, District Department of Transportation